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MMOZine

Issue 25 | November 2010

Free Magazine For MMO Gamers. *Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates*

Civilization5
BONUS MAGAZINE

REVIEWED

LEGO UNIVERSE

Build it and they will come!

REVIEWED

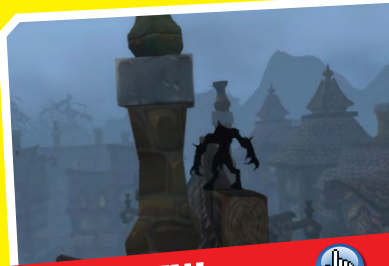
BOUNTY BAY ONLINE: ATLANTIS

A SWASHBUCKLING ADVENTURE?

WORLD OF WARCRAFT: THE SHATTERING + LORD OF THE RINGS ONLINE

+ REVIEWED

Final Fantasy XIV
Fantasy becomes reality



+ INTERVIEW

WoW: Cataclysm
Meet Ghostcrawler!

+ FIRST LOOK

Rift: Planes of Telara
The first look at this stunning new MMO

Welcome to MMOZine

The beauty of modern gaming is that if something needs improving in a game, or you just want to make it even better, then it's now even easier. Patches in games are nothing new, but these free (usually, anyway) content updates are the perfect way to continue the lifespan of a game.

Where once the release of a patch was a relatively low-key affair, now it's big news, especially when the game in question is World of Warcraft. We spoke to the legend from Blizzard that is Ghostcrawler (aka Greg Street), so check out the first of our exclusive two-part interview inside.

But there's more, including an update for Bounty Bay Online, a review of the hotly anticipated Final Fantasy XIV and a first look at Rift. Enjoy.

Dean Mortlock, Editor
mmozine@gamerzines.com

MEET THE TEAM

The MMOZine massive were told to go forth and multiplay, which they did…

LESLEY SMITH
What she doesn't know about WoW really isn't worth knowing.

ANDY GRIFFITHS
Say hello to Andy. Our PC gaming expert also edits our sister mag, PCGZine.

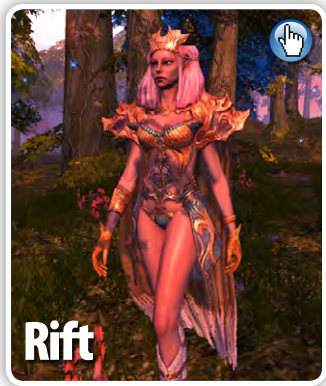
DON'T MISS!

This month's highlights…

BOUNTY BAY ONLINE: ATLANTIS
Updated and improved? Review inside!

LEGO UNIVERSE
Are you ready to block 'n' roll?

WoW: Cataclysm



Rift

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away

Rift: Planes of Telara
Guild Wars 2
City of Heroes
Fallen Earth
Darkfall Online
Runes of Magic
Fallout Online
DC Universe Online
World of Warcraft: Cataclysm
Final Fantasy XIV Online
Bounty Bay Online: Atlantis
LEGO Universe
The Lord of the Rings Online

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If you are reading this, then you didn't choose "Play" when Adobe Reader asked you about multimedia when you opened the magazine.

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People with relationships are advised against the playing of this game.
Connecting to NEED FOR SPEED™ AUTOLOG enables extreme competition through precise documentation of friends' records and stats. Hard feelings. Creative profanity.
Grudge matches likely. Electronic Arts™ and Need for Speed accept no liability for the dissolution of friendships, families, intimate relationships and partnerships.
PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED
19TH NOVEMBER 2010
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to learn how fast turns friends to foes.
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Wii
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EA STORE

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Rift: Planes of Telara

FIRST LOOK

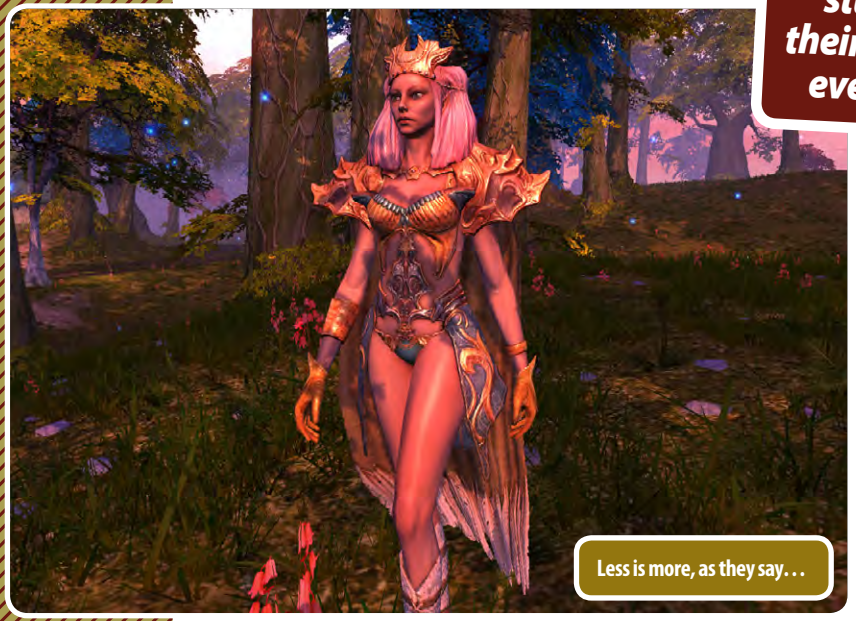
Style, substance… this MMO has it all

Publisher: Trion Worlds
Developer: Trion Worlds
Heritage: N/A
Link: www.riftgame.com/en
ETA: 2011

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Rift: Planes of Telara

This beastie doesn't look like a particularly happy chap!

"It's the turn of newly formed studio Trion Worlds to set their sights on conquering the ever-popular MMO scene"



Less is more, as they say…

These barren landscapes are the after effect of centuries of war.

What's the story?

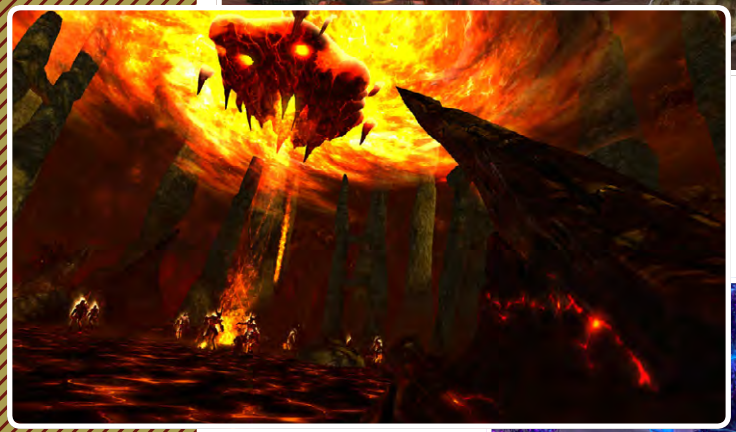
It's the turn of newly formed studio Trion Worlds to set their sights on conquering the ever-popular MMORPG scene with their debut offering, Rift: Planes of Telara. While pivoting around usual genre staples, will its unique premise cause you to respond to its call to arms in battling the incoming apocalypse?

Following the disastrous events of the Shade that occurred during the climactic days of the Mathosian civil war, the protective Ward that had previously kept the world of Telara from harm, lay weakened. Having seized the opportunity to begin claiming the land for his own, the death God Regulos sent forth waves of his minions through a series of planar rifts as they begun to ravage the surface under his banner.

Since that time, the dark forces have ravaged the surface and the death God himself now pounds upon the outside of the Ward, seeking to gain entry himself so that he can finish what was started so long ago. With Telaran's own Gods becoming uncomfortably silent, its inhabitants abandon all hope as the world begins to spiral into complete chaos.

Having lost confidence in their ability to save Telara from the brink of destruction, the people form themselves into two factions in preparation to battle against the impending apocalypse – the Guardians and the Defiant. While each shares the same goal to save the world, their beliefs differ and

Using a Fire spell against this Fiery demon doesn't seem to be the best tactic…



"You'll be able to choose from a range of six playable races, divided between the two opposing factions"

> Rift: Planes of Telara continued

as such, they fight among themselves as much as they do against their common foe.

Can I play as either of these factions?

You'll be able to choose from a range of six playable races, divided between the two opposing factions. Opting to side with the Guardians will allow you to choose between the Dwarves, High Elves and Mathosian, whereas the Defiant provide the choices of the Bahmi, Eth or Kelari.

Will classes be implemented?

While each race is equipped with their own unique ability, right from the outset of the game you'll have to choose from a selection of four core classes: Warrior, Cleric, Rogue or Mage. This however is but the start, as this initial choice diversifies further within the game into a number of sub-classes that allow you to specialise in roles such as a Paladin, Inquisitor, Assassin or Warlock, for example.

When can I get my hands on it?

While a date hasn't been set, the studio is currently targeting 2011 as its release window. Although those eager to see what the Telaran lands hold in store for them can look forward to a Beta test, that was previously scheduled to go live later this year.

The villager didn't fare so well, but these spiders are the least of your worries.

THE FLAGSHIP HAS RETURNED

Become Ruler of the World by establishing and leading a civilization from the dawn of man into the space age: Wage war, conduct diplomacy, discover new technologies, go head-to-head with some of history's greatest leaders and build the most powerful empire the world has ever known.

INVITING PRESENTATION

Jump right in and play at your own pace with an intuitive interface that eases new players into the game. Civ veterans will appreciate the depth, detail and control that are highlights of the series.

WIDE SYSTEM COMPATIBILITY

Civilization V operates on many different systems, from high end DX11 desktops to many laptops. Enjoy unlimited installations on multiple PCs with your Steam account and take your Civ V experience with you everywhere you go.*

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– EUROGAMER.NET

PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED

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7 UP

New MMOs and content updates to mark on your calendar with a BIG RED PEN!

Guild Wars 2

Developer: ArenaNet | **ETA:** Out now

ArenaNet has released a Hall of Monuments reward calculator for Guild Wars that's keyed in to you character. If you go to the Guild Wars 2 site, you can input your character's name to see what rewards you can earn in the sequel based on your achievements in the original game. It's a cool feature which we're sure will be popular with the game's (many) fans.

SUMMER 2011
- EVE Online: Incarna

WINTER
- Disney Fantasy Online

DECEMBER
- World of Warcraft: Cataclysm

NOVEMBER
- City of Heroes: Going Rogue

ON THE RADAR

Darkfall Online

Developer: Adventurine | **ETA:** Out now

After a less-than-glowing response to the game's initial release, Darkfall developers Adventurine have gone back to the drawing board, listened to the criticisms (of which there were many) and have released a whopping 6Gb expansion to the game. Interested? Then head to the game's official site now.

Fallen Earth

Developer: Icarus Studios | **ETA:** Out now

Fallen Earth is another game that's about to be changed and (hopefully) improved too, as a recent announcement by the developers on the game's forums goes into great detail on the improvements they have planned. And you know what? It sounds like it's going to be brilliant.

City of Heroes

Developer: NCsoft | **ETA:** Out now

NCsoft are about to release a new item pack for City of Heroes. Going live on the 3rd of November, you can expect an impressive range of new auras and capes. Also coming very soon is the Going Rogue expansion (review next issue), which promises to offer more than the standard patch, as it's almost a total reboot of the entire game.

Could this be what's needed to make City of Heroes an MMO classic? Come back next month to find out.

Runes of Magic

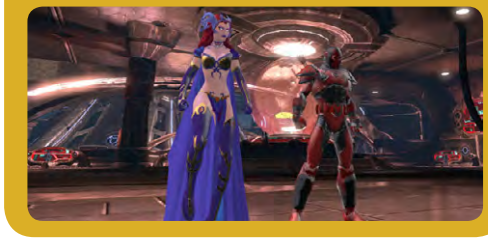
Developer: Runewaker Ent. | **ETA:** Out now

Another patch announced this month is The Guardian's Awakening for the popular MMO, Runes of Magic. Content includes access to the new world boss Amboriar and new difficulty levels for the Raksha Temple dungeon.

DC Universe Online

Developer: Sony Online Entertainment | **ETA:** Early 2011

Originally slated for a release on the 2nd of November, Sony Online Entertainment announced recently that their superhero MMO is now delayed until early next year. The reason for the delay? Feedback from the Beta testing apparently, so our hope is that Sony are taking this feedback onboard to create something very special indeed.



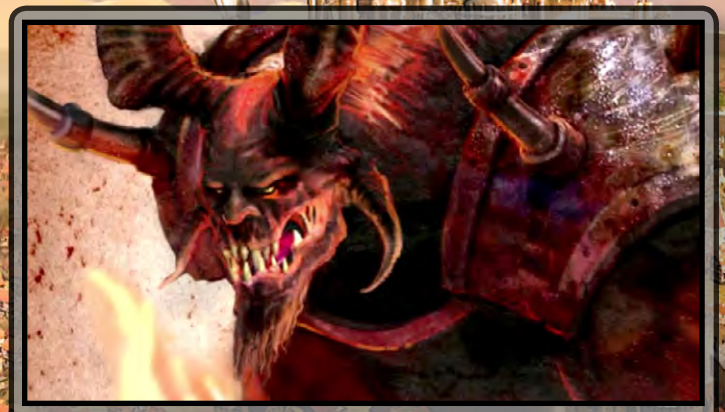
Fallout Online

Developer: Bethesda | **ETA:** 2012

We may have to wait two years for the Beta, but our senses tell us that a Fallout MMO will be something very special indeed. With a team of 90 working flat out on it, hopes are high that Bethesda will be able to transpose their best-selling openworld game to an MMO environment. And, knowing the care and attention they're putting into it, we're sure it'll be stunning.

MIGHT & MAGIC
HEROES KINGDOMS

CLICK TO PLAY



PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED

- NO DOWNLOAD OR INSTALLATION - PLAY FOR FREE - BUILD YOUR OWN LEGEND - THE FIRST MIGHT & MAGIC MMO -

"... A MUCH DEEPER, [MORE] ENGAGING STRATEGY BROWSER MMO THAN I'VE EVER SEEN BEFORE. AND IT'S FREE-TO-PLAY TO BOOT"

PC GAMER

UBISOFT

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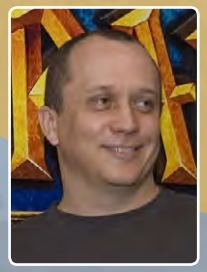
Cataclysmic Change

Will Cataclysm have the WoW factor? We asked the legendary Ghostcrawler, aka Greg Street

"We recognised in Wrath that we got a lot of use out of having a powerful and charismatic villain at the end"



Greg Street, the Lead Systems Designer for World of Warcraft

With Cataclysm coming to World of Warcraft, we sit down for part one of an exclusive interview with Ghostcrawler himself to find out more about the trials and tribulations coming to Azeroth.

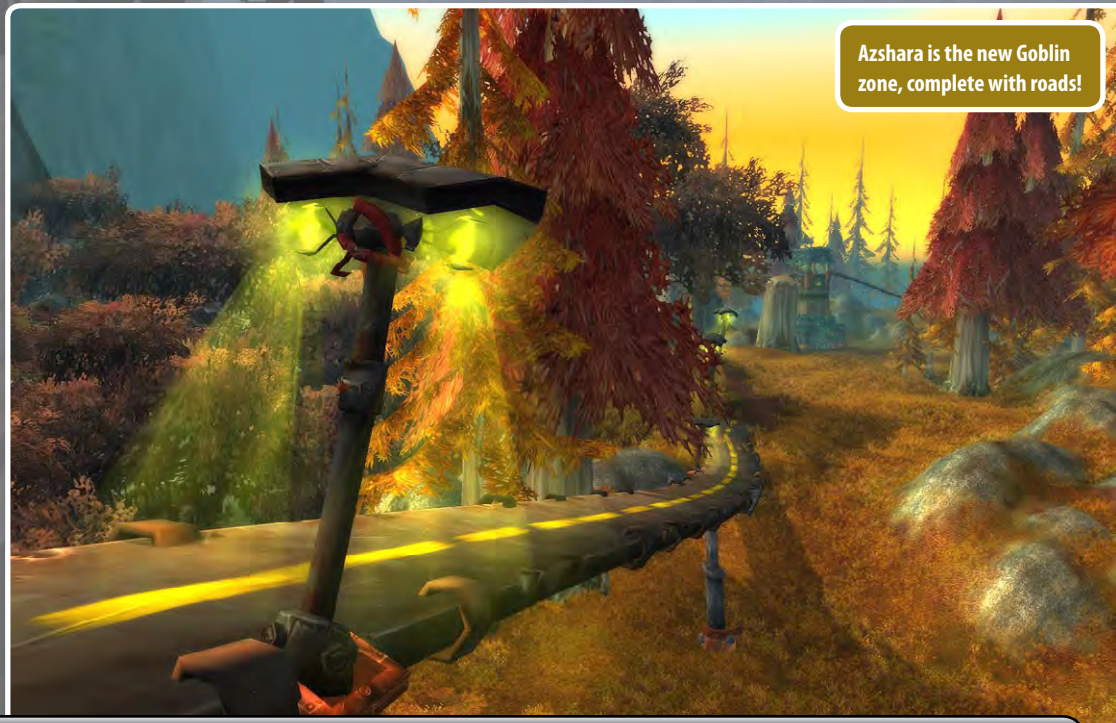
When did you start working on Cataclysm, and why focus on Deathwing as the antagonist?
It was before we finished Wrath of the Lich King – we need to start things early to get concept art going. We're very pipeline driven, so we need to have art before we can make levels; levels before we can make quests; quests before new items, and so on.

We recognised in Wrath that we got a lot of use out of having a really powerful and charismatic villain at the end, and we really wanted to do that again. We reached back into the lore and found that here was a character whose story we'd been hinting at but had not completely used. We foreshadowed Deathwing's return in some of the Wyrmrest Temple quests in Ruby Sanctum, and we knew we were going to bring him back, it was just a matter of time.

With Wrath, Arthas was there from almost the word go, appearing in quests and menacing adventurers as they explored Northrend. Do you plan to repeat this (albeit with Deathwing) in Cataclysm?
Absolutely, and it's really cool because he's such a magnificent presence. He's gigantic and one of the biggest creatures we've ever made. When he shows up in a scene he pretty much owns it.

We're doing this at high levels but also lower-level players are going to get to experience him too. Obviously no one's fighting him yet because no one is powerful enough, but his presence is felt constantly. Even in the lower level zones you can see regions that Deathwing personally destroyed and the quests focus on that. So yeah, he's very much around!

So why did you choose the Worgen and Goblins as Cataclysm's new races?
Oh that was a lot of fun! We had a list of a bunch of potential races we could choose from. We talked about obvious things like, maybe it's time to do the Ogres as a race. We settled on Worgen pretty quickly because we really wanted to have a monstrous look for the Alliance. A lot of the Alliance races look really similar and we wanted to have something big and a little scary that would fill the same role as the Tauren do for the Horde.



Azshara is the new Goblin zone, complete with roads!

Interview continued

On the Horde, we tried a lot of different ideas. We talked about this idea that Goblins would stay neutral and you could roll a Goblin for either Horde or Alliance, but there was concern that the Goblins weren't good-looking enough; that they were small, green and repulsive.

Ugly little critters…

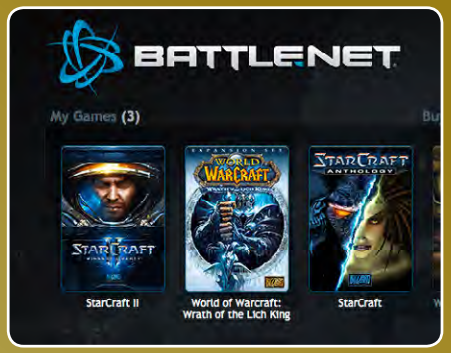
Yeah, ugly, or that they were kind of a one-trick pony. They were all about blowing themselves up, and we wouldn't be able to get enough milage out of that. Our artists went to work and there was this famous picture of a Goblin in the Tier 2 rogue set and we're like, 'that looks pretty badass, we can see that being someone's actual character'. The concept art really drove that and we started exploring what would the Goblins' starting area really look like? What would a place totally

BRINGING AZEROTH TOGETHER?

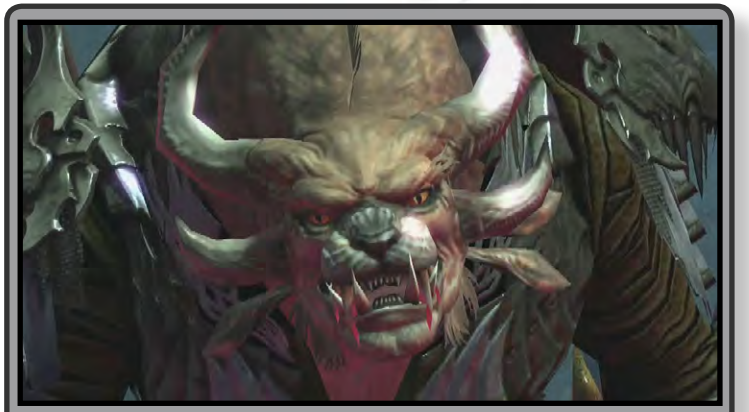
One of WoW's most notable features are the separate regions. Unlike EVE or Guild Wars for example, players must choose a specific region. So Europeans play in Europe, Koreans and Chinese in Asia and Americans and Australian gamers have servers in the US. That said, many people have friend in other regions and cannot play with them or add them using Real ID. We asked Ghostcrawler if there were any plans to change how Battle.net is used so players in one region could, at the very least, communicate with those playing on servers in another part of the world.

"We were testing the waters for that a little bit with our Dungeon Finder, which now matchmakes not just in battlegroups but across whole regions, and we can do the same thing in battlegrounds. We're now starting to explore that, and if it works out we may expand it, it depends on how things roll out.

"There's always a challenge between whether it's more valuable for people to have a single WoW community or is there something still really important about your server or knowing who the powerful guilds and the best players are on your server. There's a community there too, and if you push too hard in one direction, you lose the smaller community of your own group."



GUILD WARS 2™



PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED

www.GuildWars2.com

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Interview continued

run over by Goblins looks like? I love the beach chairs, the umbrellas and the oil barrels, and for the Goblins that's totally beautiful.

Are you for the Worgen then, or on Team Goblin?
Gosh, I kind of like the Goblins; the starting zone is so different and so unlike anything we've done before. I was really nervous that we wouldn't be able to pull it off. I think the Goblin ladies are the best thing ever. They have great animations, a lot of character and humour, and also awesome hairstyles.

But I don't want to sell the Worgen experience short. The story is really dramatic, and pretty heavy on the melodrama for World of Warcraft.

Talent trees are undergoing some of the biggest changes, so why did you decide to do this?
It's been gnawing on us for a while that it's been getting so huge! When we started playtesting, we would take a player and they would roll level 80 characters which you can do when you work for Blizzard. They would open up the talent tree and see this huge pane. Now people have larger monitors, we've tried to make it so you don't

This beast is part of the breadcrumb quest into Vashj'ir.

Goblins start out high up in the chain of command, with minions!

Wulfbane
Belrysa Starbreeze
Tal'doren, the Wild Home
There are others like you, Wulfbane. And they too, were lost and confused.
There is a place where you belong.
Tal'doren, the wild home, was once home to an order of druids who took the shape of wolves.
It is there that you will find the answers you seek. It is also there that you will find someone who can offer guidance. An old friend.
Quest Objectives
Speak to Darius Crowley at Tal'doren, in the heart of the Blackwald.
Rewards
You will receive: 4s
Accept
Decline
Wulfbane
Level 10
XP: 875
Learning Talents
New feature unlocked [Battlegrounds]
Losing Your Tail completed.
Experience gained: 875.
Received 4 Silver.
Received item: [Seryl's Robes].
Reputation with Gilneas increased by 250.
Levelling up is now even more fun, especially in starting areas.

Interview continued

need to scroll any more and can see all three panes, which is awesome. It really bought how many icons we had into a harsh light, and it was hugely overwhelming.

A lot of the talents in there were what we call bad talents and players knew that. We always wanted to get around it, and at the same time there were talents you must have or you can't function. You know, if you're an arms warrior and you don't pick up mortal strike then you're not going to be able to play properly.

So we decided to try and boil down every talent tree to its most essential elements. At first the class designers were very concerned about it. They thought they weren't going to be able to do it and then they realised how empowering it is. They cut all the talents they'd always hated or didn't get used, and we think we've made the game better as a result. Players still have interesting choices which have a more profound impact on the game and hopefully you don't need to spend so much time on websites.

"Malfurion is back, and he plays a pretty big role"

So can you let us know if we can expect another legendary weapon for Cataclysm?

Lord Darius Crow...
Well of Fury: 1/1
Just as Goldrinn's spirit once blessed our druids, let Wulfbane be blessed with the wisdom of his race and the ferocity of the wolf god.
Wulfbane
Warmage
Objectives (1)
Neither Human
- 0/1 Well of Tra
- 0/1 Well of Bal
Worgen have a lengthy story-driven opening quest chain through Gilneas.

The underwater zones are some of the most beautiful in the game.

We probably won't do one initially as we want to make sure previous legendaries have a chance to stick around for a while. Otherwise players might feel like they had to replace it too quickly, but we are talking about the legendaries we're going to do for the next patch.

So do you think that Reforging is going to help this?

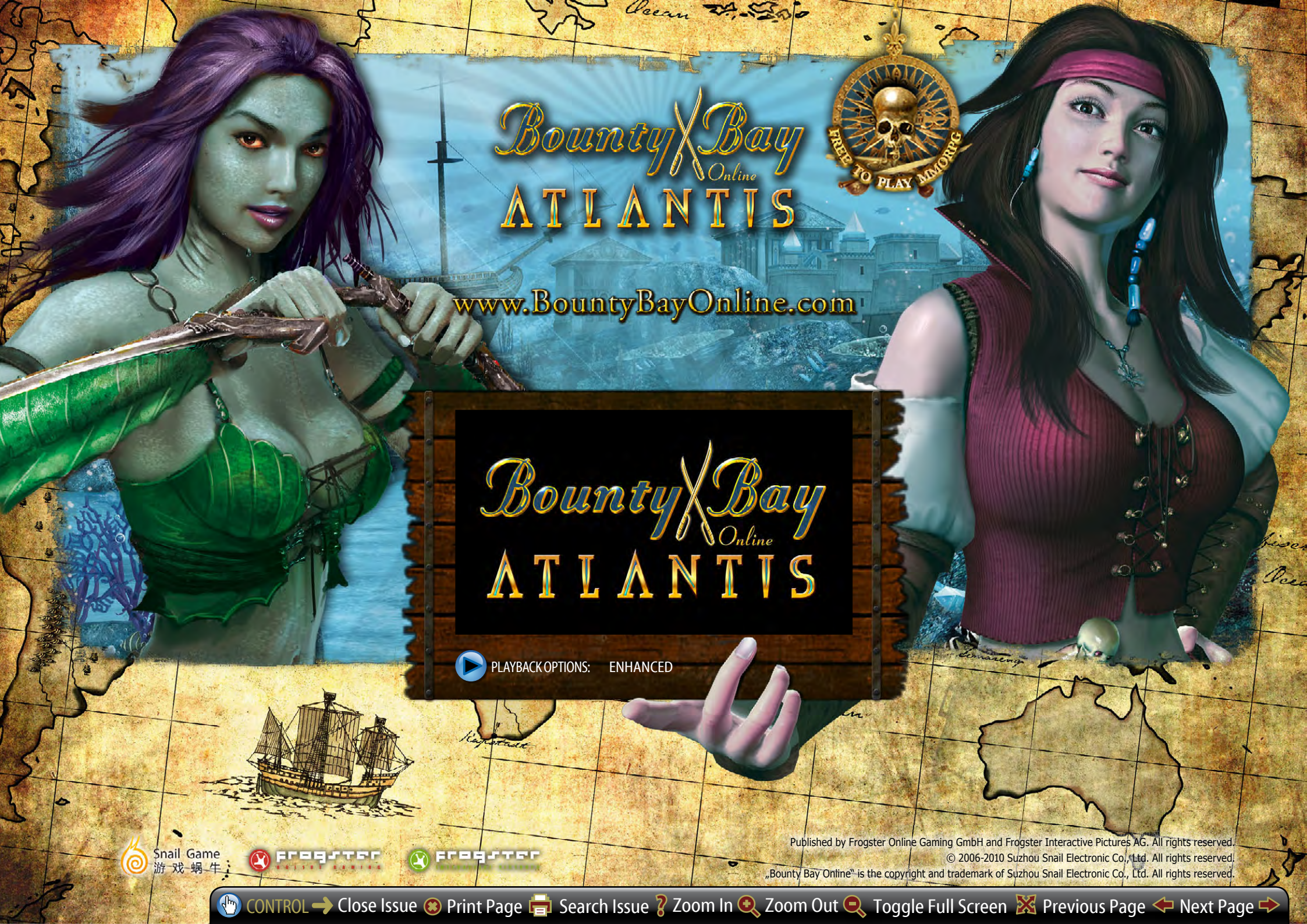
Reforging is going to be a lot of fun. It started out as this idea as a way of using weapons which might otherwise be disenchanted. We can see players discussing the best stat for them and it's going to be used a lot in Cataclysm.

There are an awful lot of important characters coming back in Cataclysm. Who can we expect to see?

Well, Malfurion is back and he plays a pretty big role. We have Ysera, the leader of the Green Dragonflight, up in Hyjal as a questgiver. Kurdran Wildhammer of the Wildhammer Dwarves is in the Twilight Highlands.

There are quite a few, and the quest designers had a lot of fun taking familiar characters, regardless of whether they are world-shaking NPCs or a guy who used to be a questgiver in one zone who has either been promoted or

You have 35 unspent talent points
When you are finished spending points, click Learn. You can always reset your talent choices by visiting your class trainer.
View Summaries
Learn
Reset



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Interview continued

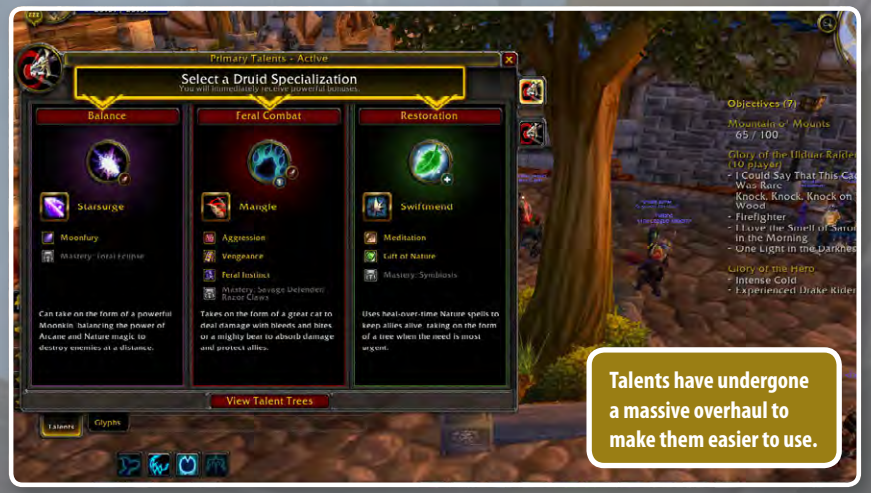
fallen down the ladder and is now in another zone. There are a lot of reoccurring characters.

Do you think it's fair to call Cataclysm WoW 2.0?
We've heard that a lot and it wasn't our intent. We didn't say that this is going to be a whole new change. We knew that each expansion is a chance to fix some of the things which have been bothering us for a while. We just had a really long list of stuff to do this time – everything from changing the level design to the quest flow in all the old zones, to revamping some of the item stats and mechanics which weren't working out well for us. It wasn't our intent to blow things up and start over. Cataclysm is just an ambitious expansion and that's where we've now ended up.

> *"Each expansion is a chance to fix things that have been bothering us"*

Do you think it's quite apt that all these changes and Cataclysm are coming around World of Warcraft's sixth anniversary?
That wasn't our intent but it kind of happened that way. It's fitting that so many dramatic and exciting changes are happening, both to the world itself and the game.

What can you tell us about the pre-Cataclysm world events you have planned?
It's based around the rise of the Twilight's Hammer. They have their fingers in a lot of pies and we wanted players to understand that they are going to be the bad guys, in the same way the Scourge came up in Northrend. The Twilight Hammer coming to power means they've unleashed a ton of elementals, and players are going to be able to defend their cities from attacks. They're going to be able to go into some of the older five-man dungeons with great heroes of the Horde and the Alliance and fight alongside them to dispatch some of these bosses. It should be exciting, and we've never done anything quite like it before.



Talents have undergone a massive overhaul to make them easier to use.

Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
Developer: Blizzard Entertainment
Heritage: Warcraft, StarCraft, Diablo
Link: www.wow-europe.com
ETA: 7th December

BACK TO THE BURNING CRUSADE

It's been several years since World of Warcraft's first expansion – The Burning Crusade – was released, and we were keen to find out how Cataclysm will affect the Blood Elves and Draenei, the last two playable races introduced into the game. How will their starting zones change when Deathwing erupts into Azeroth?

"We would like to look at them from a story perspective. It really bothers us that a new player will get up to level 60 in modern time after the Lich King has been defeated (and Deathwing is there), and then you go to Outland and everyone is talking about Illidan.

"We realise we have a continuity problem there, and we have plans to fix it, but it's probably not going to be the kind of overhaul we did for the old zones. That content is newer, and a lot of the quests and level design are fine so we would like to catch it up in time. I don't know if this means Illidan is dead and the Black Temple has closed or there's a new bad guy at the end. We haven't figured that out yet."

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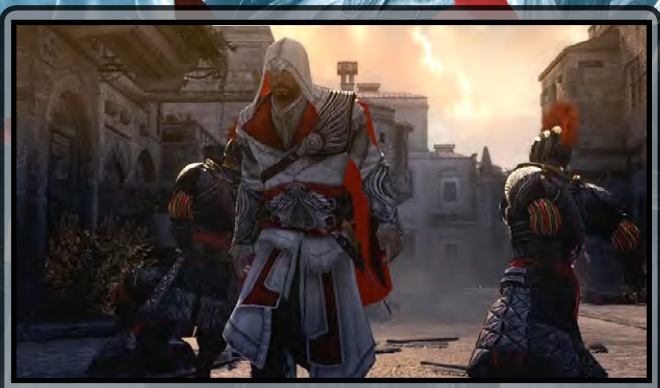

PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED

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Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
Developer: Blizzard Entertainment
Heritage: Warcraft, StarCraft, Diablo
Link: www.wow-europe.com
ETA: 7th December

World of Warcraft: The Shattering

The end of Azeroth as we know it

"From their hallowed halls of learning, the blues mumbled something about an ancient dragon gone bad…"

When patch 4.0.1. dropped in mid-October, something very different greeted players as they logged in, aside from changes to the talent trees and improved water graphics. Walking through major cities, the ground would shake, sending citizens screaming into the streets. The worried leaders of both the Alliance and the Horde were found in Stormwind and Orgrimmar, meeting to discuss the growing quakes and also attacks from rampaging elementals.

As you entered Stormwind Keep, the leaders of the Alliance stand around Varian Wrynn in a semicircle. All the familiar faces are there: Jaina Proudmore, High Tinker Mekkatorque, Velen, Magni Bronzebeard and Tyrande Whisperwind, and all are worried about the changes sweeping Azeroth. Across the seas, a similar meeting was taking place in the halls of Orgimmar. Outside, the ground was shaking again and these random quakes were beginning to startle newbie players. Why was the world shaking? Forum posts sprang up and, from their hallowed halls of learning, the blues mumbled something about an ancient dragon gone bad who was stirring beneath the world…

We're on the homeward stretch now. Cataclysm is coming in December and the end is in sight. With the release of the nameless patch 4.0.1, the Wrath story arc ended and the Cataclysm one officially began. This first patch essentially focused on the new, simplified 31-point talent trees. There were also new options for graphics, multiple monitors and a whole

All the major leaders can be found meeting to discuss cultists and quakes.

Szadek invites you to join the guild:
Greatly Exaggerated
Join Guild
Decline Invitation
Objectives (5)
Mountain of Mounts
- 65 / 100
Glory of the Ulduar Raider (10 player)
- I Could Say That This Cache Was Rare
- Knock, Knock, Knock on Wood
- Firefighter
- I Love the Smell of Saronite in the Morning
- One Light in the Darkness
Glory of the Hero
- Intense Cold
- Experienced Drake Rider
Nubgonestab the Kingslayer
<Striped Socks>
accessed by pressing the Red Question Mark
ur game menu.
nnel: [1. Trade - City] <Away>Selfishgirl the Patient
nnel: [2. LookingForGroup] <and friends>
Talbot]: Can you inv me plz Drew?
vites you to join Greatly Exaggerated.
Isirami Fairwind
<Innkeeper>

Everything about Cataclysm feels polished and brand new.

WoW feature cont.

host of class changes, nerfs and new spells. 'It also introduced a new feature reminiscent of the Power Auras add-on, which helps players know what spells to cast and when.

For many though, the most important patch is the beginnings of a multi-stage Cataclysm pre-event. This began with random quakes and has progressed to elemental invasions, thanks to the Twilight's Hammer – an insidious cult of Deathwing's followers which is fishing for converts. Most players will have come across this shadowy group during their travels across Azeroth, Outland and Northrend and, quite surprisingly, will find all members of every race under its mantle. Before it was unsettling, as you ran into the Burning Steppes and came across a bunch of your race who were not just wearing hooded robes but also hostile.

Now the Twilight's Hammer is using this to their advantage, creeping into cities and trying to pursude the good people of Ironforge, Stormwind, Orgrimmar and Thunder Bluff that the end of the world is coming and preying on the fears of a terrified populace. A series of quests has you listen to the cult and collect pamphlets (amusingly titled in the style of the evangelical: 'Elemental Fire for the Soul', 'What Does 'The End of All Things' Mean for Me?' and 'Finding Security and Comfort in a Doomed World'). Their sermons fuelled by the elemental attacks, it's up to the brave champions of Azeroth (that's you and your guildies) to try and pursuade the converted to see

Through Deathwing's eyes

Just as we went to press, Blizzard stunned everyone by releasing the much-anticipated cinematic for Cataclysm. The gloriously epic movie follows Deathwing as he return to Azeroth, beginning with the torturous replacement of the metal exo-skeleton that keeps him in one piece and also explaining the tremors that have rocked Azeroth since the release of patch 4.0.1.

The cinematic also marks the first look for many at the familiar area of Kalimdor and the Eastern Kingdoms in glorious high-definition goodness, including Loch Modan, Auberdine, the Barrens and the human citadel of Stormwind.

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Step 3. Install and patch the game to the latest version
Step 4. Log in with your gPotato.eu username and password
gPotato
ASTRUM NIVAL

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WoW feature cont.

sense and return home. When that doesn't work, you have to get to the bottom of the cult while also battling elementals and venturing into classic five-man dungeons to deal with the bosses controlling the elementals and who answer directly to the cult's leader, the two-headed Ogre Mage, Cho'gall.

Torn asunder

The final pre-Cataclysm patch will be 4.0.3, The Shattering, and it's this patch where loads of new content will come in. We're talking revamped starting zones, the Cataclysm itself and devastated capital cities personally blitzed by Deathwing himself. Gnomes will finally take back Gnomeregan, while Trolls will also get their own starter area too, and there will be new race and class combinations to boot. To give you an idea of what to expect, the only thing The Shattering won't allow you to do is level to 85, fly in Azeroth, roll Worgen and Goblins and access the new zones which include Vashj'ir, Hyjal and Twilight Highlands.

Presenting a thrilling prologue to the latest and biggest World of Warcraft expansion we've ever seen, these two patches promise revolutionary change and lore, which will keep even the most casual player riveted to their computer. With intrigue and peril, drama and a fascinating new world event, 4.0.1 paves the way by simplifying the talent trees, while 4.0.3 will introduce new-look cities and other features which is guaranteed to keep players hooked until December 7th.

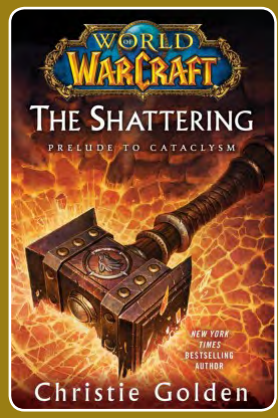
This scripted event heralds the beginning of Cataclysm.
We dwarves have a connection to the earth. We can feel her pain. And right now the earth is crying out. These earthquakes... they are both natural and not. I wanted to gather you all together and discuss them.
King Magni Bronzebeard says: We dwarves have a connection to the earth. We can feel her pain. And right now the earth is crying out. These earthquakes... they are both natural and not. I wanted to gather you all together and discuss them.

READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Blizzard have mastered the art of the tie-in pretty damn well. There are steins and comics, manga and plushies, virtual goods and statuettes. And books; lots and lots of books.

To tie in with the release of Cataclysm, Christie Golden (who wrote Arthas: The Rise of the Lich King) has penned The Shattering: Prelude to Cataclysm, which was released earlier this month. The book tells the tale of events leading up to the next expansion, focusing primarily on Thrall and Varian and Anduin Wrynn.

The Shattering is apparently the first book in a trilogy, so we can expect tales to accompany our journey through a new and changed Azeroth. While you're at it, you might also want to check out Richard Knaak's novel Stormrage, which will explain how Malfurion Stormrage got back in the game, as well as Ysera, Mistress of the Green Dragonflight.



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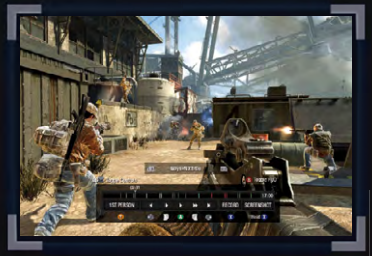

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Publisher: Square-Enix
Developer: In-house
Heritage: Final Fantasy XII
Link: www.finalfantasyxiv.com
OUT NOW

Final Fantasy XIV Online

> "The Eastern origins are clear from the outset, with five imaginatively designed races, ranging from Humans, midgets and cat-people"

Full of Eastern promise?

As of yet, only one MMO has successfully made the jump from PCs to consoles, or vice versa, and that's Final Fantasy XI. It's only natural then that its successor, XIV, seeks to blur the lines between the two platforms further with a control scheme which is not only optimised for mouse and keyboard, but also a gamepad as well.

Square-Enix's latest effort attempts to do much with the genre, and unfortunately the result is a classic case of when trying to please everybody, you usually end up satisfying no-one.

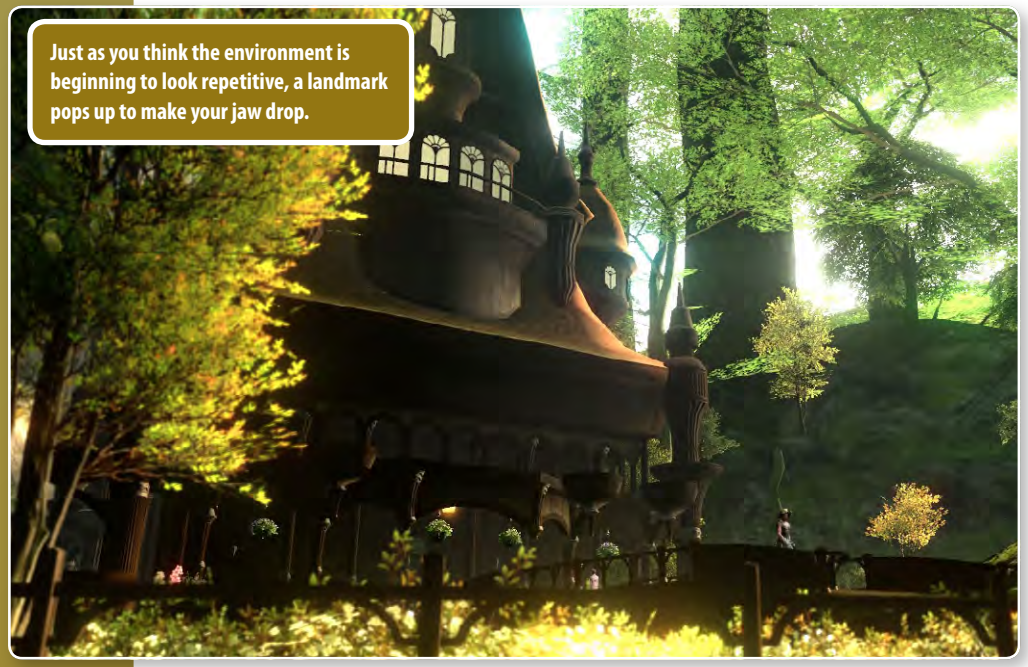
The Eastern origins are clear from the outset, with five imaginatively designed races, ranging from Humans, midgets and cat-people, as well as an elaborate class system which offers 20 different options total with the requirement to specialise in one of four disciplines – magic, farming, alchemy and combat. These practical options also expand to visual customisation as well, which has more than enough physical attribute sliders appropriate to differentiate your character in the realm of Eorzea. Before the game finally lets you watch the amazingly promising intro cut-scene, you will have the choice of three starter cities, which governs the opening hours of your adventure. We elected for the coastal region of Limsa Lominsa.

The first impression of this idyllic area is a promising one, with the graphics engine providing fantastic visuals, depending on whether your rig can get the most out of it.

Final Fantasy XIV is easily the prettiest MMO out there.

The cut-scenes are consistently memorable, usually because they are quite absurd.

The city of Limsa Lominsa is hard to navigate at first.



Just as you think the environment is beginning to look repetitive, a landmark pops up to make your jaw drop.

Final Fantasy XIV cont.

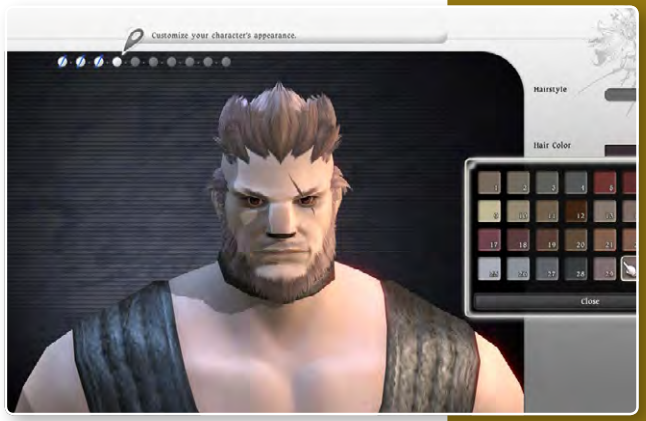
Unfortunately for us, the rest of the experience isn't anywhere near as polished, as aside from a brief look at the simplistic battle system, the game just subtly hints at what you might want to do next, and from there you're really left to wonder the maze-like citadel yourself.

A lot of MMOs have way too much hand-holding, but a sense of bewilderment is common during FFXIV's crucial opening hours. Unfortunately this is further compounded by an interface which requires too many button presses to execute the simplest of activities – such as talking to NPCs – and a map which lacks any kind of way-point functionality. The only way to find out where you should be going in quest is by clicking the map in the Journal screen. However the same markers don't show up on the main or mini-map, so you'll constantly fumble between the two individual menus. Using landmarks is a skill you quickly learn but other games provide this interactive map functionality, so why shouldn't FFXIV?

The combat as well feels needlessly fiddly due to UI constraints, with the avatar needing to enter battle mode before being able to hit enemies, and targeting's rarely as easy as one-click due to the erratic way that the mouse-controlled camera works.

Make no mistake, at first this epic title tries its best to dissuade you from playing, simply by some strange design decisions, of which the quest structure is the best example. Dubbed Guildleves, missions are often dispensed in city states, but require you to transport out of settlements to camps in order to carry out the objectives. This would be fine if teleporting out didn't have a cost in the finite resource of Anima, which accrues slowly over time, often leaving you out of pocket and forced to walk large sections of the map.

Enemy design too feels dull, as the epic monsters which FF is known for aren't peppered throughout the levels, meaning that you'll be



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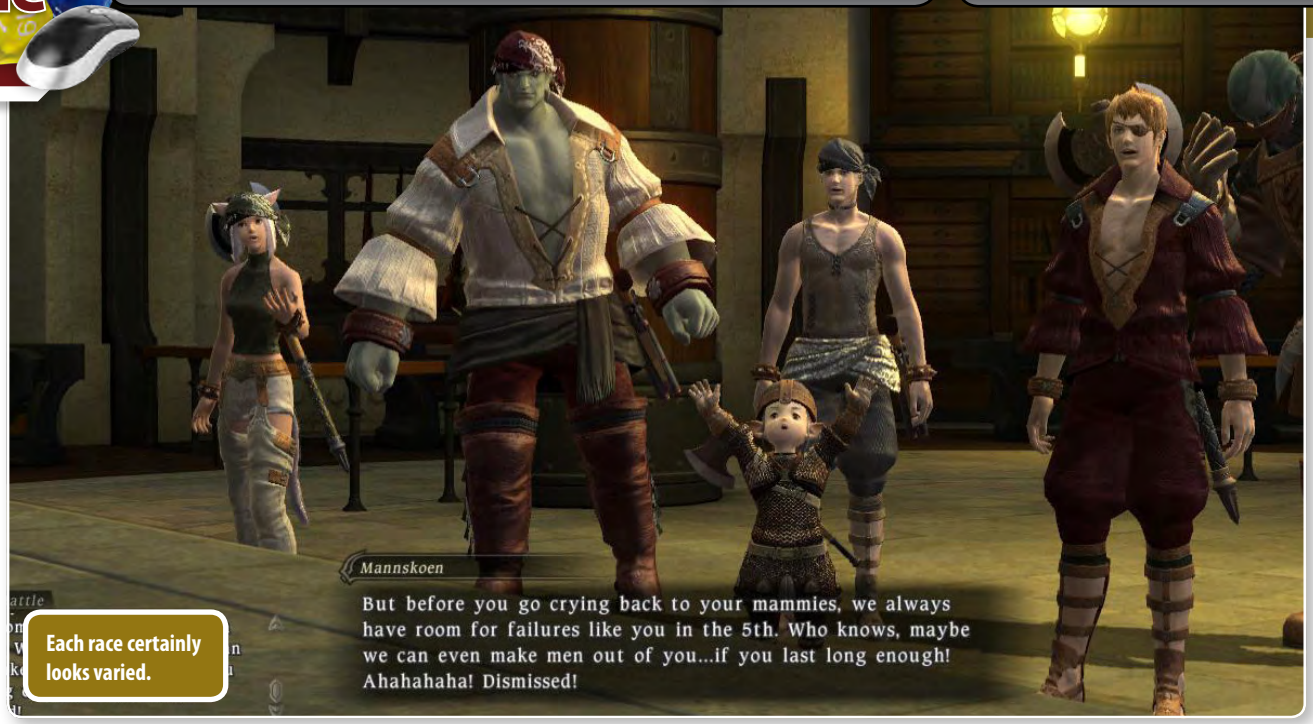

Mannskoen
But before you go crying back to your mammies, we always have room for failures like you in the 5th. Who knows, maybe we can even make men out of you...if you last long enough! Ahahahaha! Dismissed!

Each race certainly looks varied.

Final Fantasy XIV cont.

fighting rats, moles or mosquitos long into the higher experience levels.

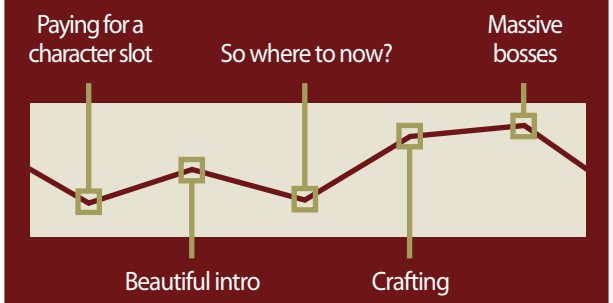
The silver lining

Final Fantasy XIV is an entirely new game, and while many will complain that their favourite aspects of XI don't return – such as the auction house – we applaud the developers for their bravery. The freedom to change job or combat specialisation by simply picking up a new weapon or equipment on a whim feels like a real shift from traditional games in this genre. The story development also builds up very nicely throughout. Characters are cute and loveable as you would expect, and the soundtrack by Nobuo Uematsu does its part to sell the grand kingdom setting.

As any MMO fan is aware, buying a game on release is always risky due to the inevitable growing pains, of which Square-Enix's latest definitely has its fair share, however there's a solid game here. Players will just have to put up with a needlessly confusing sign-up process and daunting opening hours to get to the good stuff – like the crafting and plot progression. If anything, Square-Enix have got the hard-to-do stuff right, it's just everything else that needs a tune-up. Plenty more updates are sure to, come with the map already teasing two new cities and the introduction of Chocobo and airship travel, but time really is of the essence here.

In its current state, Final Fantasy XIV is best left to fans of the series. Everyone else would do well to stay away until the inevitable series of updates arrive.

PULSOMETER: Signs of life



MMOZine Verdict

Still needs some work to reach MMO perfection

- ✓ Stunning to look at
- ✓ Flexible activity structure
- ✗ Lacking standard MMO functionality

CRAFTY CRAFTING

If you get tired of questing or max out the story quest limit of eight during the 36-hour period, there's always the option to create your own items. In each city there are many different guilds which will teach you how to cook, fish, forge metals or weapons, and create different clothing.

When you have gathered the necessary resources and purchased the different tools, you can initiate a mini-game which involves clicking through several different options. All the potential recipes aren't stored in-game, so be sure to use the many note pages located in the manual.

Patrician IV

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'This game will sweep you away with its deep complexit and pretty graphical interface'
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Bounty Bay Online Atlantis

Publisher: Frogster Online Gaming
Developer: Suzhou Snail Electronic Co
Heritage: Rune of Magic
Link: www.bountybayonline.com
OUT NOW

You don't need a map to find this gaming treasure

Those gamers looking for something a bit different from their MMOs were naturally attracted to Bounty Bay Online. Sure, the basic MMO rules were still in place, but there was a break from the usual trappings, giving players the opportunity to fulfil their long-held desire to be a pirate (or, if they so wish, they could also choose to be a trader) on the high seas. Now we have this, a new expansion for the original game, which promises much for fans old and new alike, and (thankfully) it delivers on all counts.

Atlantis is the fourth expansion for the game, and as you start to explore the new areas on offer, it's immediately clear that the game is getting better and better with every new patch. So what's on offer here?

Firstly, and in line with most major MMO expansions these days, the level cap is raised from 120 to a whopping 150. This quickly becomes important when you're exploring the two new areas, as both contain new instances that are only available to those pirates with the most swash in their buckle, And those new areas are excellent fun to play through. The first, Bimini, is a tropical paradise that has The Royal Tomb instance tucked away within it (which is available in two difficulty levels – like the other instance) and, for those looking for a real challenge, the entrance to Atlantis itself – as you'd imagine though, getting to the

There aren't many friendly faces waiting for you on the Northern Islands.

You'll need to wrap up well for this one.

A strong set of armour is essential for higher-level battles.

Bounty Bay continued

fabled land itself is going to take a special breed of adventurer. You'll need to playing at your highest levels to uncover everything this expansion has to offer you.

The other area, the Northern Islands, is a cold, inhospitable place. This may be due to the ice and snow theme, or it may be down to the fact that it's pumped full of werewolves, vampires and polar bears – all of which are ready to welcome you by decorating the pure-white snow with your pirate blood.

There's no doubt about it, these two areas will be a challenge, but this is a patch for experienced MMO gamers looking for a new experience and something to push them to their limits. The going may be tough, but the rewards more than make up for the hours needed to complete the challenges and raise your character up to the magical

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Crocodiles are always bigger in MMOs.

Bounty Bay continued

150 level – which, trust us, is going to take a significant amount of time!

Those looking for the best in-game treasure will need to take advantage of Atlantis' new Achievement System. This gives players of level 120 and above 'exploration' points as a reward for discovering new areas and hunting down the rarer monsters in the game – points can also be earned for taking on one of the game's many special quests. Then, when you've accrued enough points to go on a spending spree, it's then time to go shopping for some of the game's more valuable items.

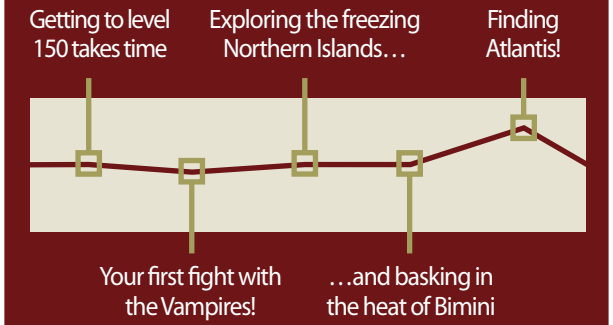
A quick recap

So, to recap: you get the chance to level up your character to 150, two massive new areas to explore, a new Achievement System (and the promise of a significant amount of new booty for the most ardent explorers and point gatherers), but still there's more on offer…

Impressive feats of skill now earn you new rewards (this is done automatically) for defeating high-level bosses or city battles, and these rewards can then be used to upgrade items or equipment (for example, weapons), while crafting has also been improved to allow you to convert existing pieces of armour into something that's likely to withstand the most severe attacks – and you'll definitely need that protection for some of the high-end bosses.

There's always a buzz around a new expansion for any game, but you can't help but feel that Frogster have pulled out all the stops here to create an update that promises much but also manages to deliver on those promises. If you've got the time, then Atlantis is one secret world that's well worth discovering. ●

PULSOMETER: Signs of life


Getting to level 150 takes time
Exploring the freezing Northern Islands…
Finding Atlantis!
Your first fight with the Vampires!
…and basking in the heat of Bimini

MMOZine Verdict

Challenging and fun, Atlantis is a very fine update

- Stunning new areas
- The promise of Atlantis!
- Challenging gameplay

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Publisher: Warner Bros.
Developer: NetDevil
Heritage: Jumpgate Evolution, LEGO Racers
Link: http://universe.lego.com
OUT NOW

LEGO Universe

Playing with LEGO has never been such fun!

"For those with children who love LEGO, this could easily be a good way to introduce them to the MMO genre"

Everybody loves LEGO, whether you're male or female, we all played with it as kids, making those little blocks into everything and anything that our imaginations could conjure. LEGO's versatility – indeed the website for LEGO Universe proclaims 'Build whatever you imagine' – is well known and it has become the toy of choice for generations. The game has also translated excellently to the console market with a successful series of titles based on Batman, Indiana Jones and that sci-fi classic Star Wars. So the question is, how does their first go at an MMO turn out?

Quite well, actually. LEGO Universe doesn't try to be WoW or EVE, or even one of the simpler MMOs on the market. Rather, it sits in the middle and sets its sights on kids, both big and small. For those with children who love LEGO, this could easily be a good way to introduce them to the MMO genre, as the game carefully teaches everything we bigger kids know and love about the genre, from class archetypes, lore to other important aspects found in MMOs, like doing quests and collecting pets.

The storyline explains how the LEGO Universe is under threat from the Maelstrom, a malevolent force created from imagination itself. Only a handful of the yellow-skinned minifigures have survived the destruction and so they form the Nexus Force to try and save their

Building is a vital part of the game, whether it's done solo or in groups.

It's also a game of black and White, and good and evil.

LEGO Universe cont.

universe. Player characters can take one of four roles that emulate the traditional classes under a new name. There are the Mage-like Paradox who are able to harness the Maelstrom and fight back, the Warrior-esque Sentinals, the builders of the Assembly and the explorers' Venture League. These four classes also introduce the black and white world of opposing factions, and it's black and white as opposed to other games' murky grey.

The game operates on a standard subscription model but parents worried about their little ones needn't worry, as there's plenty to keep them safe. The game allows players to connect with their friends but also has the in-game legend of the Mythrans, who offer lessons in online safety and helping others. The developers and LEGO Group have also taken time to lay out how the same is safe for younger players, and if you're a parent of first-time gamers then this can be reassuring. LEGO have taken pains to outline their stance on safety, and it's a refreshing stance from such a massive, well-loved company.

As for gameplay, LEGO is understandably all about playing and building. You take the roll of one of the iconic minifigures and set out on an epic adventure across a massive universe. There's plenty to do, too. You can race and play minigames, you can build all manner of amazing creations using LEGO blocks and

The game possesses its own unique graphical style.

Make new friends and connect with old ones online.

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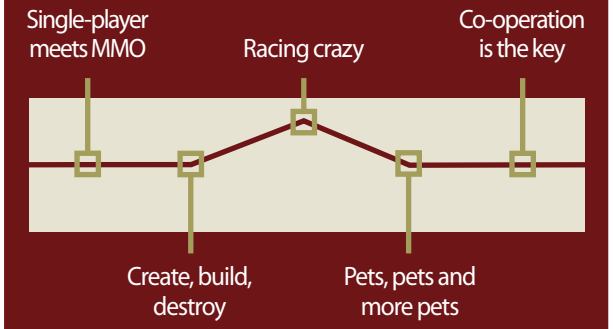
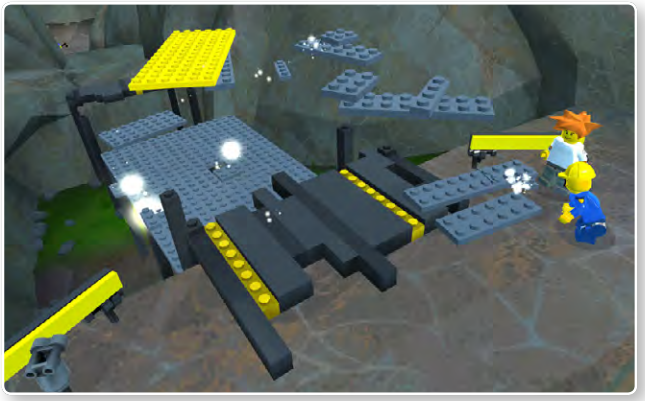
PULSOMETER: Signs of life



LEGO Universe cont.

other accessories which drop from smashable mobs. The collectors out there will also enjoy the pets you can tame. This involves a minigame where you have to identify the blocks in a particular pet. By getting this correct, you get yourself one of a range of crittery companions that include everything from dragons and pandas to robo-animals and dinosaurs.

People expecting graphics found in WoW or Aion will be disappointed but for fans of the other games created in the LEGO style will see a very recognisable look to their first MMO. The simple graphics accentuate the whole experience. This is a game created from one of the world's most beloved and iconic toy brands. What it might lack in sophistication, it makes up for in inventiveness and sheer fun. The learning curve is perfectly pitched so that even big kids will be able to get in on the act, Indeed, kids might actually end up teaching their parents. LEGO Universe is not just an MMO for kids, it's an MMO for beginners so that young gamers will easily be able to graduate to more complex games like WoW. LEGO, quite simply, offers the building bricks that teach gamers the ins and outs of the MMO and lets them have fun at the same time. So that's not a bad combination for something that's so fun.



MMOZine Verdict

LEGO Universe offers fun as well as teaching MMO 101

- It's LEGO!
- Easy to learn and play
- Child-friendly, whether you're big or small

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Publisher: Codemasters
Developer: Turbine
Heritage: Dungeons and Dragons Online
Link: www.codemasters.com/lotro/index.php
ETA: TBA

Lord of the Rings Online

Middle-earth goes free-to-play

"Currently this form of LOTRO is only available in North America, but it is planned for release in the UK"

Usually when a subscription-based MMO converts to a free-to-play model, the deathbed is waiting just around the corner, yet Turbine has managed to harness this age-old tactic to invigorate their games which were already successful, and turn them into megaton franchises. Initially they did it with Dungeons and Dragons Online, and now it's the turn of the studio's other fantasy franchise, Lord of the Rings Online. Currently this form of LOTRO is only available in North America, but it is planned for release in the UK, and Codemasters were kind enough to grant us access to Middle-earth early.

Seven classes are available from the off, ranging from the reliable Tank, Healer, Ranged Warrior and Magician, with the option to buy access to the two of the more complicated classes of Runekeeper and Warden, as well as the choice of different Human, Elf, Dwarf and Hobbit races. Making these classes purchasable is an indication of what the free element is all about, making the initial hours as uncomplicated and enjoyable as possible, which LOTRO succeeds at. The quest structure and tutorial

Mounts are now available as early as level 5, for a price.

The character creator seems much more in-depth than we remember.

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Lord of the Rings cont.

areas introduce the game's core concepts brilliantly, managing to work in key plot points along the way as well. Just walking around in the many colourful and impressive environments feels as epic as it always has and hasn't dulled with age, even though the core game was released in 2007.

The combat on the other hand seems to have lost some of its shine, and is indistinguishable from its competitors, other than the fact that these Goblins and Orcs have more resonance due to the source material. Micro-transactions permeate the entire experience, with opportunities to purchase various skill buffs, appearance items or expiring experience multipliers with Turbine Points in-game, without any fuss or hassle thanks to a smoothly implemented browser experience.

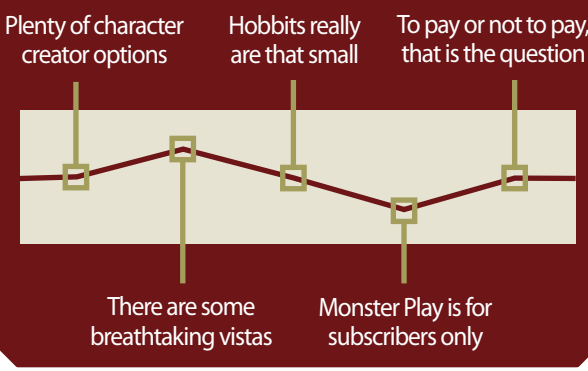
Technically it may no longer be the prettiest, but LOTRO's character hasn't faded with age.

Players can enjoy a lot of the game's charms without spending a penny, but once level 20 is breached that changes fairly quickly, with quest packs needing to be purchased to unlock dungeons for fast level advancement and opportunities to collect new loot.

The more controversial shop items are those which offer permanent statistic bonuses to characters, and these do walk the fine line between helping new players and attracting the wrath of the established user base, however the pricing is fair.

This MMO is sure to last for a long time to come, as there is still ample amounts of Tolkein's fictional world that's still to cover. Being able to explore the game's world without the pressures of a monthly fee is a complete godsend, however there's still that payment choice if you're that way inclined. It's all about maintaining your own price-to-value ratio and thankfully this game is now much more flexible in that regard. ●

PULSOMETER: Signs of life


Plenty of character creator options
Hobbits really are that small
To pay or not to pay, that is the question
There are some breathtaking vistas
Monster Play is for subscribers only

The game's various tutorial areas are still the most enjoyable of any MMO.

Seeing the stars of the franchise never gets tiresome.

MMOZine Verdict

There's no reason not to give LOTRO a try

- Simple to play
- Great plot implementation
- Aged extremely well

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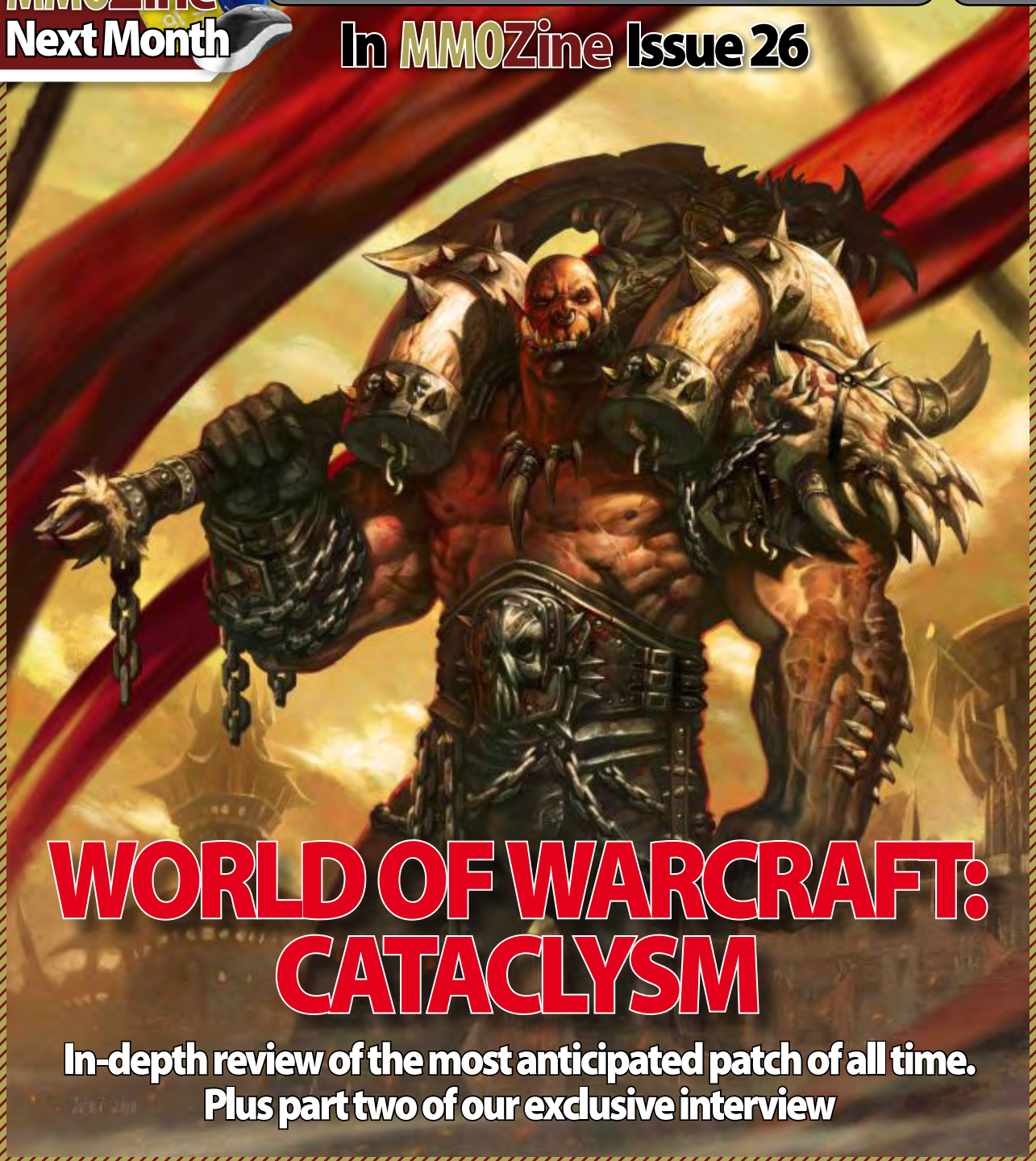

WORLD OF WARCRAFT: CATACLYSM

In-depth review of the most anticipated patch of all time. Plus part two of our exclusive interview

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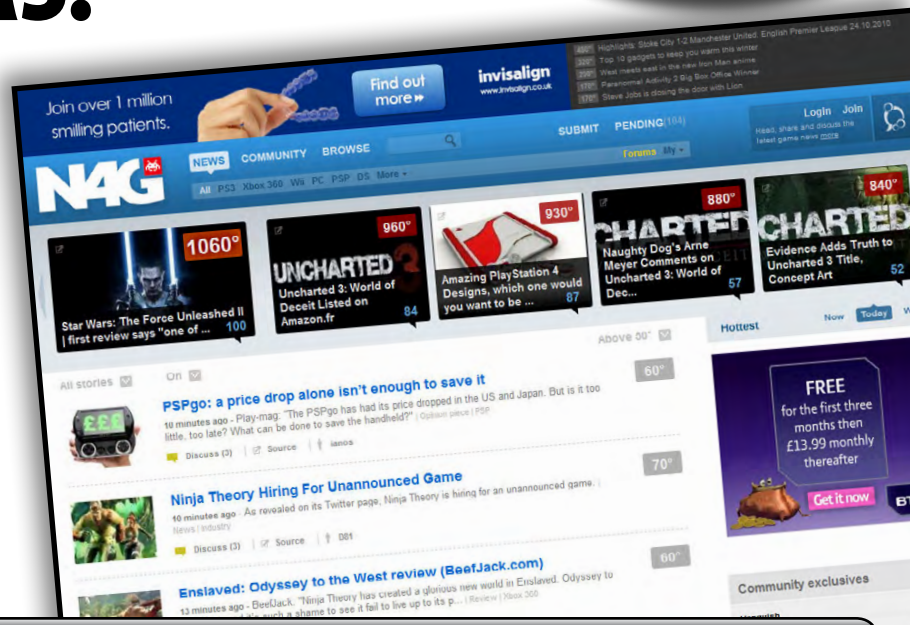
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SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION V

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF PCGZINE AND MMOZINE

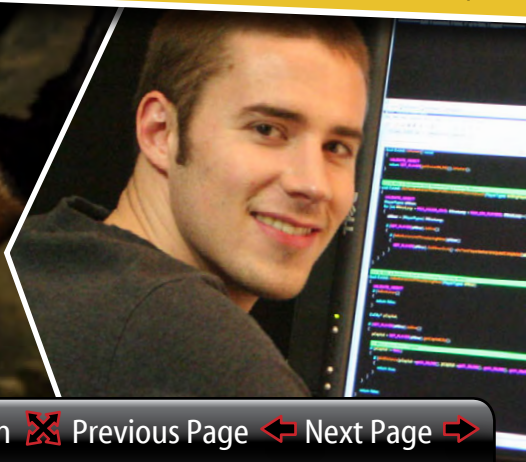
READER FEEDBACK, MODS AND MORE!

EXCLUSIVE PLAYTEST!

We find out exactly what makes Civilization V tick. Find out more inside as we dissect the biggest game of the year!

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

Civilization V's Lead Designer on hexes, Naval combat and Gandhi's love for nuclear weapons!



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WELCOME

Not often does a hex-based strategy game get people's juices a-flowing, but when said title is a new Civilization, you can bet the underpant elastic of millions of players the world over will be stretched to breaking point. What other game can make young people care about granaries and effective road network management?

As we started playing the game, a couple of questions rose naturally in our minds... How do Firaxis keep the fans happy without treading water? What's the correct balance between innovation and caution? To answer these questions and more, a rigorous and extensive playtest has been carried out on the very latest code, while we also find out just what the fans are excited about and rummage around in the brain of Lead Designer Jon Shafer to see what's been going on behind the scenes.

Finally, as the Civilization series is one of the most open in terms of modding, there's a quick glance at what the community should be looking forward to there.

Enjoy the magazine,

David Brown

"What other game can make young people care about granaries and effective road network management?"

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SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION V

PLAYTEST OF TIME

Or how to improve your hex life...

By David Brown

EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON!

All the best games make writing an intro paragraph quite tough indeed. When there's just so much history to go over, so many features to discuss and such a beloved franchise to talk about. Civilization is, it's fair to say, one of the best game series of all time. Even console kids not affected by its history have had a chance to get involved with Civilization Revolution, perhaps inspiring them to take a look at what the big deal is about Civilization.

Well, it's a big, big deal to a huge, huge number of people. Just such a simple little thing as squares changing to hexes has provoked all manner of exchange and debate. For the uninitiated, the Civ series has always been based on a simple square grid

>

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Format: PC
Publisher: 2K Games
Developer: Firaxis Games
Heritage: Civilization IV,
Link: www.civilization5.com
Out: 24th September

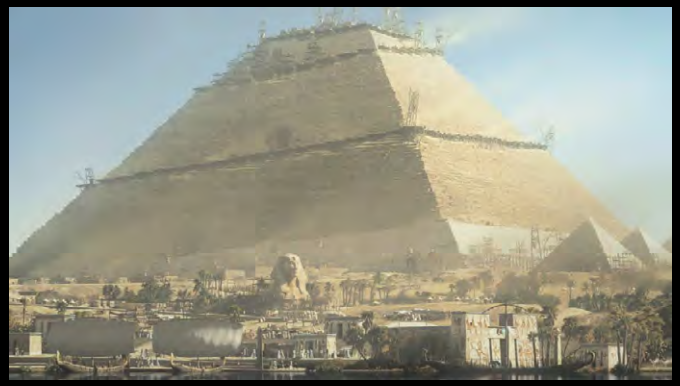
> Playtest continued

system, designed specifically with a keyboard's numeric keypad in mind. In Civilization V, the squares have gone and in their place come hexes. What this means is a whole world of different tactics and strategies that need to be learned, and a smoother, more realistic look and feel to the game world.

Having said that, the integration of the hexes has been seamless. There might be a few people complaining that a really obscure strategy won't work any more, but we can promise you that you'll be pleasantly surprised by the change. At no point will you think the hexes have been a bad idea and, eventually, you'll wonder how you ever played the game without them.

The importance and necessity of the change to hexes also becomes apparent when you find out that one of the fundamental principles of the Civ series has been removed. In previous titles, there was no restriction on the number of units that could occupy one square, leading to what some called the "Stack o' Doom". An effectively constructed stack, complete with the right balance of defensive, offensive and artillery units, could rumble across a map, destroying anything that stood in its way. It was a powerful form of attack, but that's all changed for Civ V, and it's a change for the better.

How Firaxis did this is simple: only one unit (with a handful of exceptions) can occupy a hex at any one time. With the stack system out of the way, players now have to organise actual lines of battle, thinking about the correct placement of certain troop types on the map, almost like a more combat-focused RTS game. Spearmen and infantry should



CIVILIZATION 5: VIDEO

"There's a smoother, more realistic look and feel to the game world"

> Playtest continued

go at the front, with archers and artillery behind, with fast-moving horsemen flanking. Those weaned on a Civ diet will find it difficult at first, but it leads to a more streamlined and realistic experience.

This even extends to how a city is defended. No longer will you come across an AI city with 200 archers inside it. Now only one unit can be used to garrison a city, so it's not about how many defenders you have. A city is almost like a unit in and of itself, carrying a base defence score, a health bar and even the ability to shoot enemies from range. Build walls or a castle and its defence rating rises, meaning it takes longer to chip away at its health. The unit garrisoning a city is almost like the icing on the cake, enabling a more proactive defence rather than being the only thing preventing capture.

What this all means is that, once you've got into the position where you can attack a city, it's much more like a siege than before, depleting its defences and reserves before it falls. The defending faction also has the chance to bring up reinforcements to help lift the siege. The removal of the stack attack means that there's no way you can just bulldoze straight over a city in one turn, especially now only a handful of units can actually attack the city at any one time, due to the one-unit-per-hex rule. Build your settlement in a strategically useful place, set up a few forts or citadels in key positions and your enemies will find it very hard to break you down.

This all sounds heavenly for defensive players, but it's not all good news for them. Enter the ranged unit, the humble archer or the moustachioed musketman. In Civs gone by, these guys were the mainstay of any faction's defensive force, but could be weak when pushing forward. Flip this around and you've got Civ V's ranged units, extremely potent attacking forces, but only when sufficiently protected by sturdy infantry. Ranged units can now fire over a distance of two hexes, meaning you can rain death down upon any defender. The humble archer has turned from basic defender into the crucial cog in your offensive machine. Without them, you'll struggle to dent any competent player's

CHOOSE WISELY

Each civilization has a unique ability

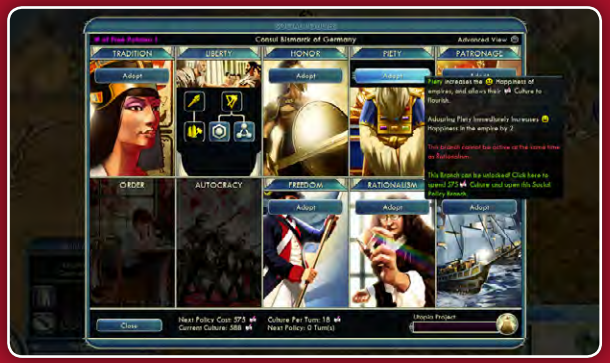
Warmongers | **Merchants** | **Builders**

Warmongers

The Aztecs have traditionally been a faction that attack without warning and, sometimes, for no real reason. Therefore, in Civ V they get a culture bonus every time they kill an enemy unit, theoretically because they've sacrificed any captives to their gods.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Developing your civilization



Culture | **Liberty** | **Combine**

Culture

Each city produces culture points, depending on the buildings constructed therein. After a while, you get the chance to unlock a new Social Policy from 10 different strands. The first three are Tradition, Liberty and Honor, with Piety and Patronage coming in the Classical Era.

> Playtest continued

defences. They're weak, though, if the enemy manages to get in close. To stop this, you'll still need your trusty warriors or spearmen to act as a screen.

Combat, then, is more tactical than ever before. It's on a smaller scale, in some ways, due to the lack of stacks, but this is only for the better. But knocking the living daylights out of one another is only a small part of Civilization. You might be a peaceful player, preferring to win the day via peaceful means, avoiding the pointed sticks of war in favour of peace treaties, research pacts and basically just being nice to everyone. These elements have changed too, in subtler ways.

One of the most obvious things that's changed is the way you govern your faction's social policies. Before, you had the interchangeable Civics, where you could chop and change between different bonus-giving ideologies depending on what your situation demanded. Need to finish some construction quickly? One quick turn of anarchy and you can change to Slavery; kill a few civilians and there, you've got the Hanging Gardens built.

Civics have gone now, replaced by a long-term system of social policies. Once you've gained enough culture points via certain buildings – libraries, monuments and so on – you can unlock a new policy from eight different strands, only three of which are available at the beginning. At first, one will improve your military, one will give bonuses to those wishing to build up a small civilization and the third provides help to rapid expansionists. Over time, with scientific advances, new trees are then unlocked, with specific flavours to each one.

Another change centres around religion, as now it's just one strand of your social policy, with no specific faiths whatsoever. You could make your faction very religious indeed, maxing out the requisite strand, but that's as far as it goes. The whole social advancement system is, as it always has been, very fluid and realistic, but these subtle changes have made it even better.

Scientific research works in pretty much the same way as it always >

> Playtest continued

has done, as does building production. However, there have been a few changes here and there that are of interest. Money is now a much more important cog in the smooth running of your empire, both internally and externally. You can hurry the construction of any regular unit or building with cash now, rather than having to wait until late in the game to get Universal Suffrage. It's certainly now easier to keep the money flowing in than before, but it's also much harder to keep it from flowing right back out again. Even the building of roads needs to be taken into consideration, so gone are the days of every single tile being covered. Each hex with a road on it costs one gold to maintain, so expansionist factions really need to bear this in mind. Luckily, there are social advances that reduce the amount of money you'll pay in maintenance, but even so, it can be an issue if you're used to just building roads everywhere.

Perhaps the biggest drain on your funds will be foreign policy, split into two specific ways to invest your cash. Firstly, you can invest in traditional bargaining with friendly factions, trading gold for technology or valuable resources. There's also a new addition to the diplomatic menu, the Research Pact. Two factions pay a fixed sum to enter the pact, and after a period of time you get to choose a 'free' technology to discover, alongside any you might currently be investigating for yourself. It's very useful if there's a particularly advanced technology in your list that will take you ages to discover and make you fall behind in other areas. Just get a Research Pact going, concentrate your regular research into smaller advances and bingo, the best of both worlds. As long as you have the cash to spare, of course.

Secondly, there's the addition of City States, small mini-factions comprising only one settlement and with no interest in growing beyond their borders. If you leave them alone, they'll just go about their own business – a lone worker tilling their fields, an occasional group of soldiers patrolling their borders. There are a number of reasons why you should take an interest in them, though. To start with, cultivating an alliance with a city state grants some quite useful bonuses, depending on what personality the state has. If it's militaristic, it gives you the occasional military unit. If it's maritime, it'll give you free access to useful resources, and so on.

To make a city state friendly, the easiest thing to do is give it

> "Money is now a much more important cog in the running of your empire"

> Playtest continued

cash. 200 gold buys 30 influence points, 400 buys 60 and... well, you should be able to get the picture by now. 30 points means it's friendly, 60 means an alliance. You can also gain influence by performing certain tasks that a city state will occasionally ask you to carry out, such as connecting a road from your territory to theirs, or killing some pesky barbarians that are causing havoc nearby. The problem is that your influence deteriorates over a period of time, meaning that to maintain a good relationship, you will really have to put the time in – which is the same as any relationship.

If you really want to, you *could* develop your social policies so that it reduces the amount of gold you need to pay or how quick the relationship deteriorates – or you could even just switch them off altogether in the options. Here, like in every other aspect of the game, the amount of options you have is wonderfully thorough. Of course, you could just attack them, although this will often lead to an increase in diplomatic tension with other factions, plus after a while, the remaining city states will form a loose coalition against you – a league of nations, as it were. This can be a hugely fun and interesting scenario to play through, too.

Another thing you'll soon notice is how user-friendly Civ V is. This was never an issue in the previous games, but it would

> "City States are new mini-factions comprising only one settlement"

Roll over screen for annotations

TALKING SHOP

Making friends and influencing people

Open Arms | **Buddies** | **Strength**

Open Arms

You don't want to make enemies of everyone. A strong ally could prove invaluable if you ever get attacked by an aggressive faction. The first step should be to agree an Open Borders deal, so you can move freely through each other's territory and promote trade.

> Playtest continued

appear that Firaxis have taken some cues from the console-based Revolution – or maybe even popular add-ons like the BUG mod – as the interface is now cleaner than ever before. It's bigger, more colourful and even easier to see just what the big decisions you need to make are. When you need to select the next technology to research, a blue sign is displayed. When you need to choose what your capital is building next, up comes a yellow one, and so on.

There's also a tutorial, which can be set to different levels, depending on what your experience is with Civ. If you're a complete newbie, you'll get the full explanation, but if you're just fresh to Civ V, you'll only get the new features explained. It does a much better job of introducing you to the game, in comparison to Civs past.

There's still so much to take in and no mere tutorial could possibly give you an explanation of all the myriad concepts and ideas – at least not in any way you'll ever be able to remember properly – but at least you won't be stuck at the 'so how do I build a settler then?' stage for very long.

Even for a relatively exhaustive piece like this, there's so much to write about that it's impossible to completely cover all Civ V's bases. Even with all the funky boxouts. It's such a huge game, with so many facets. Even after an extensive hands-on, and being a veteran of the series right from the first game, you're always discovering something new, every single time you play it. The excitement and hype building behind the fifth version's release is such that friends have been badgering me during my time with the game, begging for insight, pleading for me to allow them to get their hands on it for a brief period. Few games get such fervent support and even fewer deserve it.

> "You'll discover something new every time you play"

The final conclusion at the end of all this is that it's unlikely anyone will be truly disappointed by Civ V. There might be some who wanted a minor inclusion, or even the old customisable palaces that were so beloved way back when, but in general, there can't really be too much to complain about. It all sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? If this were a new franchise, then yes, it definitely would be. Fact is though, we're talking about one of the best series of all time, one that's had the time to make mistakes, learn from them and move on to new levels every time. There's certainly nothing to suggest Civ V won't be yet another triumph for the series that really has stood the test of time.

CIVILIZATION 5: VIDEO

SO VERY CIVILIZED

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

We probe, grill and downright harass Lead Designer Jon Schefer into answering our really quite specific questions

"With Civ V, our big focus was to try and encourage player choice"

Why did you remove specific religions from the game?
With religion, it was mainly something that came down to our philosophy for diplomacy. Our biggest priority was to make it feel more like you were dealing with characters that had rational motives, so one good example of that is they pay attention to how you expand. You build a city on the other side of them to claim some iron and they'll call you out. Another example is say you have military units in the area. They'll be like: "We see your army, come out and fight." That's kind of what the main goal for us was, that the characters should act like you'd expect a human to act. We don't expect to fool people into thinking they're playing multiplayer, but we also didn't want it to be like a system you're manipulating rather than an actual diplomatic experience.

Happiness is now an empire-wide concept, not just related specifically to cities. Why did you change the system?
Our goal with that was to try to include more options for a player developing his empire. In Civ IV, you generally had to take a very specific path if you wanted to develop your empire; if you wanted to become as strong as possible. If you built too many cities you'd get crushed by maintenance, but if you built too few, you'd be outpaced. There's this thin channel that you kind of have to travel. You want to have two cities at 2,000 BC, three at 800 BC and five at 1 AD.

>

Click here to listen to the interview in full!

CIVILIZATION 5: INTERVIEW

>Interview continued

If you deviated too far from that, it kind of unravelled. With Civ V, our big focus on the design side was to try to promote and encourage player choice more than anything, and the idea you could play with a really small empire of high population in a few cities, or a really widespread empire that had a lot of cities that weren't as big.

People might question the removal of foreign trade routes. What do you say about that?

I felt trade routes were kind of like a black box in a way with Civ IV. You would sign open borders, but it was never very clear how the trade routes were established, what was connecting to what and why. You'd go to your city screen and on the left you would see three cities +8 gold, Moscow +7 gold, Thebes +5 gold, you know, Tokyo, whatever. One of the things I wanted to do was kind of remove that black box sense, so one of the things that lead to was the roads now, where you connect cities to your capital, that'll form a trade route and make money. It's a very discreet thing – if you connect your city with a road or a harbour, a connection is formed and the amount of cash generated is based on the population of both cities.

With connecting to foreign powers, it was not as clear how to make that happen, because it would have to be this kind of idea like: "You're connected to them... somehow," and there's this math going on that you can't really figure out or control. So with the trade routes, we like the idea you're connecting your cities up and you're making money that way. You're in control of the process.

Is there anything you tried to put in but it just didn't work out?

Something we tried doing was playing around with the victory stuff, so instead of having specific victory conditions, we had a victory points system where you could do various things in the game that would give you points. If you got a certain number of points, you would win the game, or if the timer ran out and you had the most points, you'd win that way. It was something we weren't able to get to work during development, but it's actually kind of where the natural wonders came from. We had a victory race dedicated to exploring the world, because that's always been an interesting thing in Civ, and we also wanted to give people more motivation to continue exploring later in the game, so you could gain victory points for finding all the natural wonders. Ultimately, that system as a whole didn't work out.

ROCKING THE MOD SCENE

"Civ V is as simple to mod for as ever before"

People love mods in theory. It's great to get new material for your old games, completely free and developed by the most loving of the dedicated programming pool out there. But in practice, very few games get a good dose of the mod love. Civilization IV was one game that got more than its fair share, a massive community dedicated to one thing: taking the vanilla experience and then trying to make it even better. Lord of the Rings, faeries, space colonisation… you name it, it's been put into the Civ IV engine. Even Harry bleedin' Potter's universe got the treatment.

So what next for the mod community? Will they get frozen out by Civ V? Not if Firaxis have anything to do with it. According to Jon Shafer, big game designer boss-type person, it'll be as simple to mod for as ever before. There's going to be a standalone Map Editor that's 'really powerful', which has dedicated attention from a small section of the development team for over a year now.

Efforts have also been made to streamline the way those delicious mods get onto your system, with the creation of an in-game mod browser, with which you can download mods from a central upload service. And for those of you furrowing your brows over the possibility that the built-in Steamworks stuff (Civ V will be a fully fledged Steam-integrated product) will get in the way of modding attempts, Shafer doesn't believe this will happen. The mod service Firaxis are including will be separate from Steam, so it won't be poking its nose in where it isn't wanted. So what limits will you, as perhaps a budding modder, have?

"The game can pretty much do anything Civ IV could," says Shafer. Well, that's good news. You also don't have to use the in-game download service if you don't want to – it'll still be simple to just take the mods and manually install them. Shafer says that power is important. Take that away from the community and you effectively kill it, so Firaxis have been trying their hardest to make sure you can do pretty much whatever you want, with no real restrictions. So if you want to make, for example, a My Little Pony mod, then you'll be able to.

A typical scene from the Fairy Tale mod.

PEOPLE POWER

What does the ordinary man on the forum think about Civ?

Your views on Civilization V!

It's all well and good reading the words of a professional, but sometimes it's nice to know what the regular Joes and Josephines think. Delving into the depths of the most important Civ forum known to any era of man, Civ Fanatics, the following question was put to the lurkers, posters and glitterati: "What do you want from Civ V?" Here's what they had to say…

"One of the issues that there is unanimous enthusiasm for is the new method of strategic resources, so rather than one horse tile allowing you to build as many cavalry as you like, a single horse tile might provide four horse resources, allowing you to build four cavalry. To build more, you need to find another tile with a horse on it."
Ahriman

"The thing I am most eager to try out is how the combat works, with the hexes, one unit per tile and ranged combat. I think whether Civ V is good or bad for me will depend a great deal on the AI. If it can handle its units vaguely sensibly in combat – infantry at the front, archers/artillery firing from behind and fast units trying to flank you – then I will be very happy."
LegionSteve

"After hearing the rationale behind removing religions, and seeing how some of the new systems are going to work, I think it will be nice to not automatically be someone's best friend or worst enemy simply because you have a different religion."
Suho1004

"Giant Death Robots. I want hundreds of them. Thousands so I can swarm my enemy with them."
Lord Olleus

"I love that they have included a BattleMech in the game, but I think it would've been cool if they had included a larger future era, allowing me to build orbital bombers, fighter jets that could transform into submarines, armies of clones, and genetically mutated sheep dog kamikaze bombers! Maybe one for an update, that!"
Schuesseled

"I'm interested to know what will be replacing the wonder movies. Since it is so difficult and challenging to build them, they deserve a special movie to show you how great your accomplishment is."
Cropper

"I want lush and organic Graphics. While not important from a gameplay perspective, if I'm going to spend 200+ hours playing this game, I do want to be amazed at the graphics, and Civ V has not fallen short on my expectations to make its latest iteration more beautiful than ever."
12agnar0k

"Personally I would like to see if the new mainteinance cost for buildings will really make expansion harder, and city development more thoughtful."
Marioflag

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